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UNCLAS PARAMARIBO 000184

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT TO VISIT SURINAME: TRADE,  
EXTRADITION TREATY TO TOP THE AGENDA

REF 02 PARAMARIBO 1169

¶1. ACCORDING TO THE FEBRUARY 24 EDITION OF THE LOCAL DAILY "DE WARE TIJD," SURINAMESE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY MICHAEL JONG TJIEN FA ANNOUNCED DURING LOCAL CARNIVAL CELEBRATIONS ON FEBRUARY 20 A VISIT BY BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT LUS INCIO LULA DA SILVA TO SURINAME AT THE END OF MARCH/EARLY APRIL. SOURCES AT THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE AND INDUSTRY TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT SURINAME'S MAIN GOAL IS TO SECURE A TRADE AGREEMENT WITH BRAZIL, WHICH WOULD GRANT IT GREATER ACCESS TO THE BRAZILIAN MARKET FOR RICE, WOOD, AND OTHER PRODUCTS. THIS AGREEMENT IS ESPECIALLY NEEDED TO SHORE UP THE COUNTRY'S TROUBLED RICE INDUSTRY. A TEMPORARY MEASURE THAT ALLOWED SURINAME TO EXPORT RICE TO BRAZIL AT A REDUCED TARIFF RATE OF 4 PERCENT INSTEAD OF THE 11 PERCENT TARIFF LEVIED ON NON-MERCOSUR COUNTRIES EXPIRED IN DECEMBER 2003. (SEE REFTEL FOR A FULL DISCUSSION OF SURINAME-BRAZIL RELATIONS.)

¶2. SURINAME WOULD ALSO LIKE TO CONTINUE DIALOGUE ON THE INTEGRATION OF REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN SOUTH AMERICA (IRISA) PROJECT, A TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION PROJECT THAT WOULD LINK NORTHERN BRAZIL WITH THE GUIANAS. THE PROJECT, WHICH HAS BEEN UNDER DISCUSSION FOR YEARS, HAS SEEN LITTLE PROGRESS TO DATE.

¶3. IN A FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR, RICARDO LUIZ VIANA DE CARVALHO, THE RESIDENT BRAZILIAN AMBASSADOR, ADDED THAT IT IS EXPECTED TWO AGREEMENTS NEGOTIATED WITH SURINAME, ONE INVOLVING AN EXTRADITION TREATY AND ANOTHER INVOLVING THE REGISTRATION OF BRAZILIAN NATIONALS, WILL BE SIGNED DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT. THE LATTER ACCORD WOULD GIVE THE ESTIMATED 40,000 BRAZILIANS HERE LEGAL BUT NOT PERMANENT RESIDENCE STATUS.

¶4. COMMENT. FOR ISOLATED SURINAME, A VISIT BY BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT LULA IS A CELEBRATED EVENT SINCE VISITS BY HEADS OF STATE ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN. THE LULA VISIT PROVIDES THE VENETIAAN ADMINISTRATION WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE A TRADE AGREEMENT THAT GUARANTEES SURINAME GREATER ACCESS TO THE BRAZILIAN MARKET AHEAD OF THE UPCOMING 2005 ELECTIONS. A TRADE AGREEMENT WITH A POWERHOUSE LIKE BRAZIL WOULD BE TANGIBLE PROOF THAT THE RULING NEW FRONT COALITION IS ACTIVELY FORWARDING SURINAME'S ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL INTERESTS. MORE BROADLY SPEAKING, A TRADE AGREEMENT, AN EXTRADITION TREATY, AND THE GRANTING OF LEGAL STATUS TO BRAZILIANS HERE WOULD BE MILESTONES FOR SURINAME-BRAZIL RELATIONS AS THEY WOULD SIGNAL GREATER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES ON CRITICAL POLICY ISSUES (TRADE, LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND IMMIGRATION). END COMMENT.

¶5. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

BARNES

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2004PARAMA00184 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

v1.6.3